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ABSTRACT

Emphasizing that the topic of culture in the classroom is always present, this chapter from a book on the teaching of adults, explores the meanings and relevance of both concepts of "culture" and "ethnicity" especially as they have significance for the learning situation. It is noted that a sensitive awareness of cultural differences should be implicitly embedded within each course of study, program and attitude, and shared by teacher and student alike. For the teacher of adults, the implications of culture in the classroom includes being aware that the teacher is always teaching more than the content. It is from this notion that several concrete suggestions are drawn, including: offering students a choice in addressing the teacher and doing the same for them; learning to pronounce students names; and being sensitive to current political situations. A 23-item list of references and 13 additional reading suggestions are included. (DB)

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CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER III

CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

THELMA BARER-STEIN

PRACTITIONER'S SUMMARY

Emphasizing that the topic of "culture in the classroom" is always present, the author explores meanings and relevance of both concepts of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' especially as they have significance for the learning situation. Most importantly, she notes that a sensitive awareness of cultural differences should be implicitly embedded within each course of study, program and attitude, and shared alike by teacher and student. That is to say that the tacit presence of cultural differences should be positively used as an enrichment to study and to human relationships.

The concept of culture itself may be defined in varying ways but is taken here as "the sum total of all aspects of the life patterns of daily living." While the concept of ethnicity is taken to mean the differentiation of a minority cultural group, the author points out that this could be taken to mean that every person may be considered as an 'ethnic' depending on their geographic location. When their cultural group is dominant, they are no longer 'ethnic'! Most importantly, the successful functioning and relating of peoples from differing cultural backgrounds develops most successfully when overt efforts are made in the host society to foster an ambience of security and comfort. This is aided by helping to create familiarity with new patterns of daily living. This can be a part of learning situations for adults, when the very differences within the classroom can be seen as resources for possibilities, views, and ideas.

The implications of this for the part-time teacher of adults includes being aware that "the teacher is always teaching more than the content", and it is this notion that forms the basis for the author drawing forth several concrete suggestions.

1. *offering students a choice in addressing you and doing the same for them*
2. *learning to pronounce student's names*
3. *being sensitive to current political situations*
4. *being alert to cultural slurs*
5. *encouraging individual questions and contributions relating to cultural background and concerns*
6. *being aware of differing language abilities*
7. *being critical of class resource materials and persons*
8. *being alert to the differing structure of the daily life of others*
9. *permitting flexibility in the curriculum for the adult learner's needs*

10. replacing mere tolerance with serious and continuous efforts to understand cultural diversity

Any factor that can help a teacher to be more effective is ultimately of value and worthy of effort. Especially for the part-time instructor of adults, attention to the matters listed above require no costly outlay, but can facilitate comfort and lessen anxiety on the part of the learners. Learning is always enhanced when the potential learner feels at ease. Most importantly, rather than considering cultural diversity a liability in the classroom, the adult educator needs to view such differences as the important resources for learning and human interaction that they really represent.

CHAPTER III
CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

THELMA BARER-STEIN

> *Culture in the classroom is not a topic that you have the privilege of adding or deleting. Culture is always present whenever humans interrelate with one another.*

Culture is what forms an integral part of each person's identity and behaviour. It exists and expresses itself whether or not we are overtly aware of it. Cultural differences are expressed in languages, appearances, perceptions, lifestyles, attitudes and values.

It is in the interests of effective teaching, that each educator of adults have some understanding of the implications of culture upon and within oneself as well as others, and how these may be applied to enhance communication and learning.

The awareness and implications of cultural understanding within a learning situation have been studied and discussed under many titles and labels. Here are a few:

- Ethnic Pluralism
- Immigrant Studies
- Development Education
- Multicultural Education
- Intercultural Education
- International or Comparative Studies

The essence of each is knowledge and understanding first of one's own culture and ethnicity as well as that of others, in order to appreciate and promote such human awareness and concern on a local or global basis. This is not to say that such study is either esoteric or egocentric. Often such studies yield important information about ways of doing things in cultural contexts that differ from our own but which may have valuable implications for us. At other times, studies of processes of problem-solving and decision-making (for example) in other lands are helpful in business and marketing on both a local and international level. Just as any intercultural contact, whether on an individual, diplomatic, military or commercial level, benefits from awareness of personal behavioural characteristics, so too do the contacts between teacher and learner.

In Canada, as in many other areas, differing cultural groups within on province or one city is a demographic reality. Canada is home to more than 100 differing ethno-cultural groups and it is this reality that motivated the promulgation of the official government policy of Multiculturalism in 1971 to give explicit recognition of this fact. Since that time many programs have been developed and much effort have been expended to both encourage and promote multicultural awareness, and not without some criticism. Do such 'multicultural programs'

encourage the status quo of minority groups and help to maintain the elitism of dominant groups? Instead of heritage programs and cultural celebrations, should we not be promoting 'Canadianism'? How, if at all, can teachers be educated for this 'multicultural reality' and would it matter if they weren't?

There are many questions and many questioners, and the debate will continue to rage, even while the wider presence of differing cultural heritages continue to express themselves in differing ways. But if we accept that cultural heritage is an indelible part of each person's identity and that any enhancement of our understanding of the adults we are working with would be an advantage, then it follows that it must also be an advantage for the teacher of adults to find out more about this ubiquitous and omnipresent matter of culture.

This chapter will attempt to explore briefly some of the concepts of culture and what is meant by 'ethnicity'. Of special interest to teachers will be an overview of some approaches to culture that have been used with varying success in Canadian education.

And finally, with some sensitivity to the subtlety of the issues involved, some suggestions by which the teacher may enhance the mutual learning that takes place in any learning situation.

Cultural awareness can make an important contribution to the learning in your classroom. Often when a teacher ignores the tacit responsibility of promoting an atmosphere of openness and respect with regard to cultural diversity, the unfortunate corollary may actually be conducive to the promotion of negative stereotypes, narrowing viewpoints, racial slurs, regardless of the subject-matter of the course.

This is to underline that teachers are always teaching both by the content of their work and also by the process of the teaching itself. This includes explicit words and terms as well as the whole realm of non-verbal communication in gestures, facial expressions, body postures and even seating arrangements.

Therefore, the inter-relationships as well as the interplay between verbal and non-verbal communicative processes all contribute to the totality of what is happening in any learning situation, be it a classroom, laboratory, workshop, or a gathering under a tree. Mutual understanding based on knowledge and respect will enhance any such learning situation and must be the goal of any teacher.

What Is Culture?

Without at least a cursory examination of some concepts of culture as viewed by various scientists, it would be difficult to really compre-

hend the profound significance and implications of culture of each person's daily life. Just as Huxley said:

> . . . the better you understand the significance of any question, the more difficult it becomes to answer it . . .

so too, we will see that the more one uncovers varying concepts of the meaning of culture, the greater is the difficulty in trying to explain it simply.

Since anthropology is the study of man, it's not surprising that most definitions come from this field of study. I have selected a few of these to present here in this discussion to show that there are some commonalities even within the diversity.

John Walsh [1] has stressed the importance of a world view and appreciation of cultures with his emphasis on the need for Intercultural Studies. He offers a succinct definition:

> One's own culture is that life pattern within which one feels secure.

yet he also goes to state that culture's important aspect is that of its dynamism, evinced by the continuous changes some of which are represented by the traditionalists of any culture who seek to maintain the status quo and the progressives who strive for change. Walsh maintains that the people of a culture share:

- history and language
- theological or religious outlook
- common value system
- common political or juridicial system
- common educational system or/and literature
- similarities in physiological appearance

As early as 1944, Clyde Kluckhohn[2] defined culture simply as "the total way of life of a people", but also included in his definition the fact that this total way of life of the group also profoundly affects the individual's life and is perpetuated "so long as it meets the needs of the individual for orderly way of life and the satisfaction of biological needs."[3] In later writings (1962), Kluckhohn adds to his definition the whole realm of implicit and explicit behavioral patterns as well as ideas and artifacts as also being integral to a particular cultural group.[4]

Not satisfied with these, M.F. Ashley Montagu adds yet another vital characteristic of culture:

> Man alone among the animated forms of nature . . . has moved into an adaptive zone that is entirely a learned one. This is the zone of culture, the man-made, the learned part of the environment.[5]

It was Alfred Kroeber, the first student of the famed American anthropologist Boas, who said that "the most significant accomplish-

ment of anthropology in the first half of the 20th century has been the extension and clarification of the concept of culture."[6]

Summarizing the main aspects of culture, we may arrive at a statement like this:

> *Culture seems to represent the sum total of all aspects of the life patterns of daily life that are learned by an individual within a culture that determinedly affects that person's behaviour, offers a sense of order, security and identity, and yet paradoxically is in a state of continuous change.*

The Learning of Culture

Considering this statement, many questions arise. How do persons learn their culture? When does this learning begin, and does it have an end point? Does an individual have any exercise of choice in this learning? Just how is behaviour affected? How is it possible for learned life patterns to offer one both security and identity and at the same time be in a flux of change? Are there other reasons for retaining cultural membership? And is this stated culture of a societal group the only type of culture existing?

The differences so evident in differing cultural groups becomes more clearly apparent when we realise that learning begins (at least) in infancy and even the briefest considerations in differing birthing practices and beliefs, child-rearing, parental responsibilities for example by a farming community in northern Quebec, a tribal group in Africa, and an aristocratic family in England are sufficient to bring to mind the disparity in values dealing with perceived responsibilities, discipline, feeding and so on even though each family may believe that what they are doing for that child is 'the best way'. Learning, whether directed by inner needs or outer forces of the society begins early and likely ends only with death. The flexibility of learning choices at any given period of one's development may well depend upon the mores of the total cultural group.

> *But what may prove to be most significant of all in one's learning may be the fact of the accumulations of learning occurring even before one is aware of having learned anything at all!*

Consider for just a moment the huge 'package" of behavioural responses, attitudes, communicative skills and so on that the small child brings to the first day of class in a school. Throughout the lifelong process of learning, approval of parents and family and later peers, teachers, fellow workers and managers as well as the cultural community as a whole each play their part in shaping that daily life pattern for any individual.

Perhaps one of the strongest reasons for the sense of security evinced by the mores and traditions of a cultural group is the fact that these life patterns have in great part provided for the continued existence of that group and each person within it. It is in this context that probably the greatest test of choice and change may occur: if that choice of change *enhances* the life patterns and thereby the group survival, then it will be accepted. If in any way suggested changes may *threaten* the group's cohesion or survival, then the changes will be discarded by formal or informal consensus.

There are many reasons why an individual remains identified with a particular cultural group. Some of these reasons may be voluntary or involuntary. The sense of security connotes also a sense of belonging and a sense of comfort with that which is familiar. Ways of doing things that can be done without conscious deliberation, save a lot of time and energy. The well-worn rituals of daily life and the traditional routines of performance in varying situations are all but taken for granted within one's own cultural setting and group. The merest gesture, the slightest intonation of speech, each are well-understood. Within such mutually understood rituals and traditions, it is not uncommon that a familial sense of care and concern as well as support, make group cohesion a daily advantage despite pressures for change.

Cultural Identity

In the western world we take pride in the concept of individuality, yet without cultural identity, the individual would not get far. A great deal of what we claim as personal identity is actually composed of the myriad of involuntary attachments to customs, values, manners, beliefs, and attitudes rooted in cultural soil and learned before we were aware that we were learning anything. But if personal identity is so closely linked to one's cultural identification, then how may we account for individual differentiation within each cultural group?

To even begin to shed light on this question, we must again examine our meaning of culture. Thus far, I have really only given consideration to the notion of culture in terms of societal groups. What of other human groupings, not based on family? Here we may give consideration to corporations, institutions, professions, occupations, socio-economic status groupings, age groupings, even male and female divisions of humanity. Different though they may be in direction and purpose, they retain identifiable characteristics and even rituals and sometimes traditions, *that profoundly affect the daily life patterns of those individuals that are a part of them*. In fact, the complexity of this concept of 'culture' increases immediately on the realization that it is possible for one person to be a part of several 'cultural' groups at the same time.

For example, if we can separate out certain patterns as being intrinsic signifiers of particular cultures, then it's not difficult to see that an individual can at once be Italian, Canadian, be also a member of

the profession of medical practitioners within a specialization of psychiatry, and at the same time be a member of an upper-class socio-economic group as well as being elderly and female. It is as though each of these cultural memberships add extra layers to the individual's identity. Most importantly: each of these 'layers' was learned. Further, each addition heightens the uniqueness of that individual identity.

Wilma Longstreet[7] writes at length of the problems that exist between the culture of the home and the culture of the school.

> *When we speak of 'cultural adaptation' we may really be speaking of the sudden awareness of being within a differing cultural setting that requires the individual to quickly learn those daily patterns (or accommodate to them in some acceptable way) that will grant one security in the new environment.*

Such adjustment or adaptation is crucial and although we are not usually aware of doing this, it is a process we assimilated early on.

Although Longstreet's work deals with children and adolescents, there are many factors which apply equally to adults and which profoundly affect ability to learn, learning styles, as well as attitudes to the learning itself. While it is possible that the adult's cultural patterns have become more firmly fixed over time and habit, some important differences between children and adults in the adaptation from the home culture to the school culture (for example) rest mainly in the adult's greater degree of life experience in assuming new roles in differing situations, and in greater opportunities to exercise logic and reasoning to select from available choices in any situation. The adult may also have more control and/or power.

> *Adult learners have usually been able to exert some choice as to whether and what they will learn; children more often may have learning imposed upon them.*

Movement from one cultural group to another whether permanent or temporary provides a shudder of shock to one's identity and sense of belonging. This seems true whether one considers movement from one country to another (as in immigration) or simply visiting another family or school. In some historic instances culture itself has been imposed upon others as in the historic Turkish occupation of Greece, the temporary disappearance of Poland from the map of Europe, and the more recent Russification of the Ukraine. Yet while cultures may also be accepted voluntarily through learning (as in some intermarriages) ironically, it is often the forceful imposition of one culture upon another that does more to preserve the original culture, than does the peaceful coexistence of differing cultures. This phenomenon will be pursued in the next section.

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What Is Meant By Ethnicity?

Just as the term 'culture' conjures up varying interpretations, so too does the notion of 'ethnicity'. Frequently one hears of the term with a distinct minority connotation to distinguish smaller cultural groups within a dominant one; at other times this term may connote reference to quaintness as in folk traditions of dance, song or foods. Within each of these usages, 'ethnic' carries a note of condescension by the speaker. This deserves closer scrutiny, particularly as we are aware of the many cultural groups extant in Canada's own multicultural society.

As in the varying concepts of culture, there are also many viewpoints of ethnicity. Two sources that view an ethnic group merely as a means of differentiation follow. Canadian sociologists Crysdale and Beatty create this definition:

> Ethnic Group: Persons who share a common descent, a sense of collective identity and usually a common cultural heritage . . . language and religion. The term is often *incorrectly applied* to only minority national groups but it can be used to refer to dominant groups such as the English or Scots.[8]
>
> (emphasis is mine)

The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences[9] points out that ethnic group represents a "category of the larger population whose culture is usually different from its own."

But if one removes the sense of dominance from the definition, it becomes clear that the group characteristics are the same.

Or put in another way, in the country of China the Han Chinese are the dominant cultural group and therefore within China are not usually termed as 'ethnics'. Yet the Han Chinese who may live in other lands, whether first or fifth-generation may, according to some definition by called 'ethnics'.

Can we thus conclude that any cultural group may at some time be considered to be 'ethnic' in the minority sense depending on their geographic location?

Now since we can see that any cultural group may at some time or place be considered to be 'ethnic', let us for the purpose of discussion proceed with the definition presented by Crysdale and Beatty (shared by many others) and assume that this is so. That is to say then, *that each person is an ethnic*. For those to whom no pejorative connotation lies embedded within this term, there may be no affront. But for those to whom this concept implies "quaintness", "primitiveness" or "folk-customs", the reaction may be one of disbelief.

Pejoratives and disbelief aside, consideration of the meaning of ethnicity is important if only because of its widespread use at least in the western world.[10] Similarly to the concept of culture itself, ethnicity conjures many questions. Whether or not it is accepted by an individual or a group, what is generally meant by 'ethnic'; how does one get to be one? What is understood by the term 'ethnocentric'? How may we gain some understanding of the inter-relationships of ethnic groups referred to as 'assimilation', alienation, or conversely as acculturation and accommodation? If the notion of ethnicity is seemingly so troublesome, how is it that it endures, and people retain their ethnic identity?

It is difficult to separate out the qualities of ethnicity that actually differentiate from culture. I have come to believe that frequently identifying oneself with the larger culture as for example speaking of oneself as 'Canadian' in Canada does not offer unique differentiation as implied when one refers to oneself as a hyphenated Canadian: Italian-Canadian. Can it be that retention of ethnic (minority) identity is part of the personal need for identity and belonging, thus in part a reason for the endurance of ethnicity? For this reason I offer the notion that ethnicity may also be understood as one's own personal slice of culture.

It seems that ethnocentrism is more widely spoken of than is 'cultural centrism'. Yet they mean essentially the same: the sense of superiority that arises when a group feels that their way is the only way, superior to others and that therefore they have little or nothing to learn from those others. As Fersh[11] says:

> The elders teach that the ways in which we do things are the natural ways, the proper ways, the moral ways. In other places, they are "barbarians" and "foreigners" and follow a strange way of life. Ours is *the* culture, theirs is *a* culture.

While this attitude may contribute to the survival and cohesion of the group, it also can unfortunately lead to xenophobic tendencies where all who differ are denounced and hated for those differences. Listen carefully to news broadcasts of other areas of the world where populations are described variously as congested, trouble spots, underdeveloped and overpopulated, seething and so on. Is any area of Canada ever described in this way? Scan a report of a multicultural festival and note the many terms of description such as colorful, folkways, quaint, different. Of course one group seldom considers its areas as troublesome, or its traditions as quaint. On closer and impartial examination, it is often those characteristics that may have enabled varying groups to survive and it is even often possible that some inventions, ideas and even aspects of lifestyles can be adapted and helpful elsewhere.

Ethnocentrism taken to extreme may completely isolate the group from outsiders: both people and ideas. The inability or unwillingness to open and to share for whatever reason may hold the seeds of racism

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and the sprouts of prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. What is not known may be wrongly conjured.

Fortunately reality is somewhere along a continuum where ethnic groups varyingly open and close to others. Sometimes there may be imposition, albeit with good intention. Such was the case of the many missionary groups many of whom truly believe that they had a 'better way' and used education, medicine and even food supplies to entice others to their 'better way'. More recently the western world has 'shared' technology and aspects of materialism with parts of the world that neither needed it nor benefited from it. Only more recently has there been an actual global reversal of such trends towards movements of cooperative education, medicine, agriculture, business and other fields with care taken to fit comfortably within existing modes, conditions and even traditions. On a more local level, deeper understanding of the cultures of others has given people fresh insights into their own backgrounds.[12] The realisation of the qualities of pride and shame, of accomplishment and failure, and of the universal drive of human beings everywhere to survive in a world of peace, is making inroads past the crusty cultural barriers.

Assimilation vs Integration

It is likely this same sense of cultural superiority (over the ethnics) that spawned the many stages in Canada's own history of attitudes towards immigrants. (Strange that both the English and the French as majority groups should so readily lose sight of their own positions at some point in history – as immigrants.) The early 1900s saw the period of *assimilation* where the WASP (white, anglo-saxon and protestant) image was strongly and overtly presented in all forms of media, but especially throughout the educational system with the express intent of producing homogeneous Canadians. Influx of more immigrants led to the popularity of the hyphenated Canadian, denoting pride of both past and present as in 'Dutch-Canadian', 'French-Canadian' etc. After World War II 'race' became a dirty word and 'assimilation' was too uncomfortable after the world had witnessed their dire meanings and expression for and by the Nazis.

> *Kovacs and Cropley*[13] describe assimilation as the process of groups becoming more similar to each other, in other words, as a diminishing of ethnic differentiation. Their description is one that incorporates varying degrees of adaptation.

That is to say that assimilation is not an 'either-or', but a process that is individualized both in type and degree. For example in the work world many people readily adapt as far as clothing, routines, even jargon are concerned, yet maintain their ethnic language, foods, cloth-

ing and even manners upon returning home. More interestingly Kovacs and Cropley point out that the opposite of assimilation is 'alienation' and although usually considered as a negative term (one of loneliness, anxiety and estrangement), it may actually be that the assimilation of one factor or area of daily life may necessitate the alienation of another. It seems that one must leave something in order to add something else. Finally, in their view, assimilation and alienation may depend on viewpoint. For example, the development process of the teenager may well be viewed by the parents as rebellious alienation from them, while the adolescent may see it as a movement toward independence and assimilating with peers.

> *Similarly, the process of becoming more deeply identified with a cultural group could be seen as alienation from a former group.*

E. K. Francis[14] considers the use of 'integrated' which somehow seems to suggest a minimization of the problems of assimilation by 'better fit'.

> *Francis notes that "ethnics may be said to have been integrated to the extent that they* function properly *within the social order of the host society." Perhaps on the other hand, ethnics may consider themselves sufficiently integrated or assimilated when* they *feel secure or comfortable.*[15]

Now with some understanding of ethnicity, it seems to be clearer that whether one uses the term 'culture' or 'ethnic' to denote a particular societal group, *the identity accepted by the individual seems to be most important*. Movement between cultural groups, in the form of 'assimilation' seems to be a matter of degree rather than existence or non-existence. But this increased awareness and understanding seems to open wider the question of ethnic endurance.

Despite pejorative connotations held by some people, many reasons could be advanced for the persistence of voluntary and involuntary ethnic identification. Such identification may occur not on the part of the individual or group so identified, but rather, from external sources. By this I mean the calling or labelling of someone or some group as belonging to a minority cultural group when they, themselves long ago considered themselves to be merely Canadian.

Persistent identification is often found where the group members are committed to varying but profound belief in the group. For example while Jews may speak many languages, bear physiological appearances similar to almost any world group, accept and adapt to varying political systems, and even vary in their religious beliefs from atheism to fundamentalist orthodoxy, yet all may claim to be Jews. And this even in the face of repeated historical discrimination, persecution and attempts at genocide. Books have been written in attempts at explanation.

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Ethnicity has not only persisted, but for many groups there has been evidence of historical revivals and survivals, :most recently in the "new ethnicity".[16] Isajiw[17] offers some explanation. He points out that ethnic groups can be identified in two ways:

1. as a group of people who share a distinct culture
2. people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same group.

That is to say, some may actually share the culture while others may only share the feeling of identity.

Note how many times the term 'identity' has appeared in this chapter. Necessary in any personal search for identity are the qualities of pleasure and pride in that identification, a sense of belonging (acceptance), some link with the past history, and some belief in self-worth. Isajiw adds and discusses yet another factor. He feels that the fragmented and competitive society spawned by technology that marks the western world, has turned people towards ethnic identity because it is deeply associated with shared feelings related to human events and the seasons of nature. It seems that the greater the individual feelings of anonymity, the greater is the need for ethnic participation and identification.

From the preceding discussion, and even perhaps from personal experience, we can see that

> *Culture is an indelible facet of each person's identity and behaviour and since any form of education is linked with human communicating, it follows that cultural considerations must find an important place in that relationship.*

Approaches To Culture In Canadian Education

While it may seem obvious that recognition of multiculturalism may be the first step towards incorporating some global awareness into any program of studies, the means of doing this have varied. Some have been more successful than others. Ray[18] has noted:

> . . . all Canadian teachers share a responsibility in promoting an atmosphere of respect for cultural diversity, and teaching which ignores this function cannot be described as "good" . . .

However, Ray is quick to note that there is also a lack of general agreement as to whether this is so. Vague expressions of dissension have been heard:

- multiculturalism is a political issue
- it is something for immigrants
- emphasizing cultural diversity creates ghettos
- multiculturalism will 'dilute' the curriculum[19]

In fact, cultural diversity in Canada is a demographic reality. Understanding of any reality and its shape and direction is urgent for human survival. Within Canada's policies and the resulting programs for multicultural understanding are many that are specifically directed to aid the immigrant newcomer in learning about his/her new home, job and language. But in the cooperative sharing of ideas and experiences, immigrant students, workers and professionals are an enrichment to the entire society. By a policy of mutual encouragement and participation of schools and communities in such learning activities, newcomers now feel more comfortable about participating in the general society rather than retreating to ghettos for security and comfort.

Such cooperative sharing should never be in the stilted form of yet another course, but should be part of the sensitivity to cultural diversity that is projected through every program.

CREATING CULTURAL UNIFORMITY

A brief review of some of the approaches and notions critically considered by T.R. Morrison[20] in his historic review of teaching methodologies offers some insight. Up to the 1960s, these were all characterised by the goal of creating cultural uniformity. That is, the mission of all educational systems in Canada was to "absorb into itself those who differ from it", based on the old assimilationist theories. While this attitude has been officially dismissed, Morrison openly wonders how many teachers and programs across the country still favor (by their attitudes, programs and materials) the dominant Anglo group?

CREATING CULTURAL APPRECIATION

A condescending nod in the direction of the minority cultural groups after the 1960's brought a period in Canadian education of cultural appreciation. Indeed in Troper's[21] view, it was really a period of confusion where "if educators related at all to the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups in Canadian society it was usually as a problem to be overcome rather than as a factor in Canadian society to be celebrated". Such appreciation seemed to include displays of foods, music and costumes as though cultural identity was an item that could be put on display and then dismissed. Morrison's belief was that such displays were only accepted passively and he questions the possible interpretation by audiences. The passivity of the presentations seem to have been reflected in the passivity of audiences.

VALUE INCULCATION

The third approach to this type of education is described by Morrison as "Value Inculcation", wherein the general goal is to point out the role of values in developing cultural sensitivities. Hopefully, the learning of values would lead to "resocialization and value substitution"

which is a euphemism to express the idea that the open comparison of various cultural value systems would undoubtedly find Anglo values as being superior. But Morrison and others have noted that value systems are often context-bound, depend upon interpretation, and may not be equally understood by adults and children. Finally, great responsibility rests with the person (teacher, parent etc.) defining, transmitting and interpreting such values, as well as with the recipient.

Realising some of the pitfalls of the previous general teaching approach across Canada, the next approach became one of an attempt at a universal set of values and moral principles, but soon it became apparent that value conflicts exist not only between but also within individuals and societies. For example Canadians may as a whole view subjugation of women as a negative and yet it may be an integral aspect of some cultural traditions, thus leading to tensions and conflict.

TOWARDS A TRANSCULTURAL REALITY

Morrison argues for the view that all persons be seen as having both an individual as well as a collective identity "that is both rooted in the past and also moving toward different futures". He presses for "transcultural awareness" wherein a person's cultural commitments have transcended his own towards that of a universal identity.

> *What is unusual about the transcultural person is an abiding commitment to the essential similarities between people everywhere, while paradoxically maintaining an equally strong commitment to their differences.*[22]

The teacher who wishes to be sensitive to the cultural diversity of the learners within his/her classroom, must not only be aware of his/her own culture but also have knowledge and understanding of the similarities and the differences of others. This implies an understanding of what this awareness should consist of, and how one may feel assured that sufficient awareness is being expressed. But how to evaluate something so elusive? So many approaches have been tried and found wanting, yet it seems that every effort should be made towards a 'transcultural' reality.

Implications For The Culture-Sensitive Teacher

Accepting the importance of cultural sensitivity may well prove to be the first important step to becoming transcultural. It is also possible that since most of our own individual cultural knowledge is subconscious, a willful effort to take note of one's cultural nuances may be the initiation to deeper personal knowledge as well as general cultural respect. For example, the reader may have chosen to peruse this chapter just out of curiosity, but having read this far will already have a

greater sense of the matter of ethnicity and culture than may have existed previously.

> *If nothing else at this point, the part-time teacher of adults will be aware that culture does have an impact on one's identity, behaviour, values and thus upon learning.*

Regardless of the topic of the education, whether updating, skills acquisition, or extension of cognitive knowledge, *the teacher is always teaching more than the content*, and the learners are not only learning, they are also inter-relating socially.

As educators of adults, we are continually making unobtrusive selections not only in the precise content of the courses being presented, in their pace and timing, but also in the type of resource persons and materials we are selecting to use, and even in the timing of deadlines for projects and presentations which may be in conflict with special occasions. We express either implicit or explicit implications and leanings politically, socially and economically in our own dress, manners of addressing and greeting and the handling of small unpredictable incidents within the learning situation. Have we always been aware of these?

Here are some concrete ways that the transcultural teacher can enhance the open ambience and thus contribute markedly to the comfort and learning of the adults, and incidentally gain credibility and personal respect. You will note that the following list includes cultural as well as sub-cultural differences. Overall, it seems that erring on the side of formality (at first) is better than informality which may be taken negatively.

1. Be aware that many peoples of the world are accustomed to offering and demonstrating great respect for teachers. *Offer them a choice in addressing you* by first name or surname; accept each with aplomb. Do the same for them.

2. Make a point *to learn and to pronounce the student's names* correctly and as formally or informally as they indicate. They have pride in their names and identity even as you do. Recognize and respect this; your effort will be appreciated.

3. *Be sensitive to current political situations* not only in the obvious arena of discussions, but also in groupings and seating arrangements and take care not to favor one culture over another.

4. *Be alert to cultural slurs*. Be open to incorporating several views of a discussion topic by making use of the differing views and backgrounds within the classroom to give a personal slant. Take the time for clarification and examples when there seems to be evidence of prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping or just a misunderstanding.

5. *Encourage individual questions and contributions relating to cultural background*. For example, after an explanation of a skill or metaphor,

encourage the offering of differing skills and differing metaphors from other cultural contexts.

6. *Be aware of differing language abilities in English* and take care to speak loud enough as well as distinctly. Use examples whenever possible and encourage feedback to determine when further repetition or a better example may be required. Often simply *speaking more slowly* can be of great help.

7. *Be critical of class resource materials and persons*:
   - do they represent varied points of view?
   - do they appeal to varied senses and feelings?
   - do they avoid offending minority groups? (i.e. cognizant or handicapped, poor, etc.)
   - Accuracy? Well-qualified? Current?
   - are they stimulating and appropriate to the learner's development level?

8. *Be alert to a different structuring of daily life*. For example, in manners of greeting, inviting, praising and criticizing. "Yes" does not always mean that things are being understood; it may simply signify politeness. An invitation however casually expressed may be understood seriously. Laughter may indicate embarrassment rather than humor. There may be initial misunderstanding of punctuality and deadlines. It may be important *not* to insist on male-female mixed groups for projects or discussions: allow people to form their own groups, find their own seating. Respect those involved in differing holidays, eating restrictions, wearing unusual apparel or even stepping aside to perform prayers during class time.

9. *Flexibility in the curriculum* is important for all learners but especially for adults. Be alert to pick up personal concerns and current events or issues which can be related to literature, language or skills or whatever the content may be. Openness for the inclusion of the needs and experiences of the adult learners can be one of the most exciting aspects of an adult class. The teacher as the facilitator, is in a position to point out the mutuality of humaneness in any situation and in this way increase the involvement of the people from differing cultures.

10. *Replacing mere tolerance* with serious and continued efforts to understand and accept the reality of differing values and perceptions.

Why Should Culture Be An Issue For The Part-Time Teacher Of Adults?

The need to increase one's awareness and understanding of a range of cultural differences is of importance in this global village of humans, if only for survival. But since the aim of most transcends mere survival, then a mutuality of sincere caring is of crucial importance, but especially for teachers at any level.

Any factor that can help a teacher to teach more effectively is ultimately of value and worthy of sincere effort on the part of the teacher.

Even just awareness and subsequent consideration of ethno-cultural differences will help to expose previously overlooked areas of misunderstanding, intolerance, and disrespect both of teacher and learner.

It is well-known that the atmosphere of a classroom can enhance or decrease the degree of learning. Cultural awareness and sensitivity and thus the determined development of a transcultural sense will help to make people more comfortable with one another, increasing both trust and respect. Even those who appear or speak in a way differing from the majority will soon come to see that it is their opinions, ideas and knowledge that are important, rather than outward impressions. Even as they are aware of being regarded as individuals, so they will come to regard others similarly.

All of these factors are equally important whether the learners are children or adults. An atmosphere of understanding and respect (but not necessarily agreement) is an ideal worth striving towards. But it is especially important for the adult learner to be recognised as having life experience and identity that are of value and are valued as evidenced by their encouragement to be active contributors within the learning situation. The part-time teacher of adults is often teaching part-time adult learners, and the efficient use of available time is important. Being uncomfortable means time and energy removed from learning. Many of the previous list of implications and suggestions add not only to comfort, but also to the relevancy and immediacy of the learning. Shared responsibility in contributing to the curriculum helps to make the learning a collaborative effort, and teachers and learners become peers in the mutuality of learning.

Making use of cultural identity as a resource material in itself can be accomplished readily in an adult group, and the involvement of differing behaviours and views as well as sources can enhance literally any content.[23] Classroom cultural differences are rarely considered as a viable and tangible resource, but they are there.

Culture As A Fundamental Ground Of Understanding

This chapter has explored something of the meaning and relevance of culture and ethnicity for the part-time teacher of adults. This was seen as the necessary fundamental ground of understanding – often overlooked – to the more specific suggestions for the learning situation. Since cultural differences are indelibly a part of each individual, it follows that understanding and making positive use of this phenome-

non will increase individual openness and imbue the learning atmosphere with deepening meaning and respect.

The cultural diversity existing in any learning situation, but especially in a classroom of adults must be seen and utilized as the rich source of learning that it really is.

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